ROB LIEFELD

YOUNGBLOOD

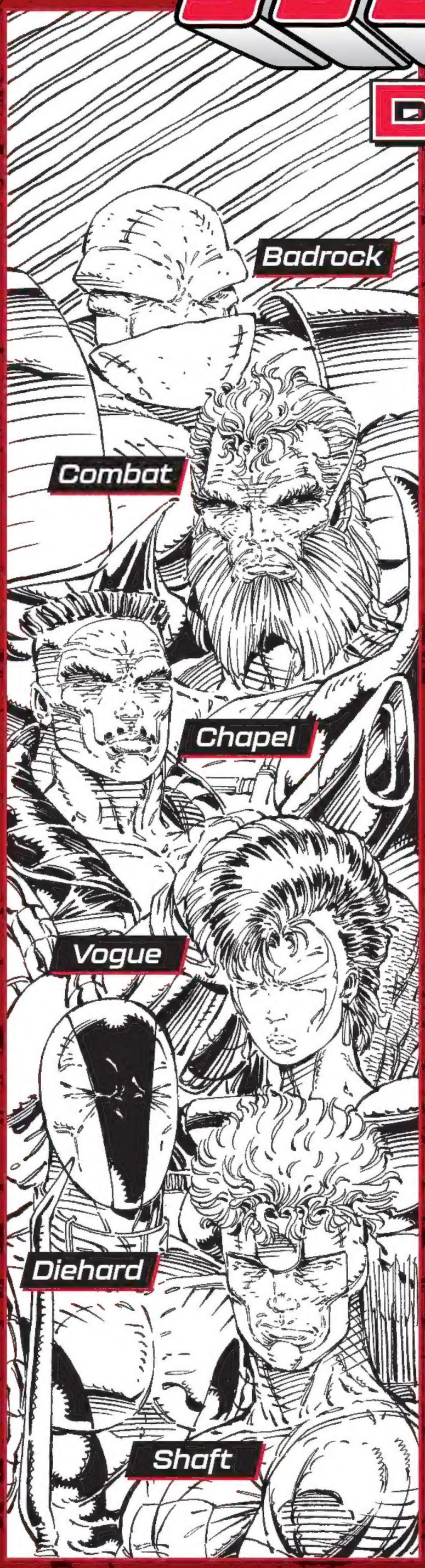
image

2
MAY

DELUXE

LIEFELD
JUANMA

YOUNGBLOOD DELUXE



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BERLIN

HE HAS MEMORIES. THEY ARE BURIED, DEEP DOWN INSIDE HIS UNCONSCIOUS MIND... BUT THEY EXIST.

A FATHER LOST. KILLED BY A MADMAN. THE DESPERATION OF A FAMILY STRUGGLING TO SURVIVE. A BOY MAKES A FATEFUL CHOICE.

A CHOICE TO **EVOLVE.**

THERE WAS A TRANSFORMATION. WHAT HAD BEEN A MERE BOY WAS NOW A MAN. OR MUCH **MORE** THAN A MAN. HE BECAME THE **FUTURE.**

IF, IN FACT, HE **HAS** A FUTURE...

OKAY, SO WE HAULED ***SLEEPING BEAUTY*** HERE UP FROM IRAQ. GOT ANY INSIGHTS, DOC...?

JA. I DO BELIEVE I *RECOGNIZE* THIS SLEEPER TECHNOLOGY. IT IS GERMAN-MADE, CIRCA LATE 1930'S.

FOR DECADES, WE HAVE ENTERTAINED RUMORS THAT *GENETIC ENHANCEMENT EXPERIMENTS* WERE TAKING PLACE AS EARLY AS THE FIRST WORLD WAR...

... MOST NOTABLY A DOCTOR *GARNET WELLS,* WHO REPORTEDLY TOOK ON THIS AREA AS HIS LIFE'S WORK. MANY BELIEVED HE WAS SIMPLY AN *URBAN LEGEND,* THAT HE NEVER TRULY EXISTED.

I WOULD SAY THIS TEST SUBJECT EFFECTIVELY *REFUTES* THAT OPINION.

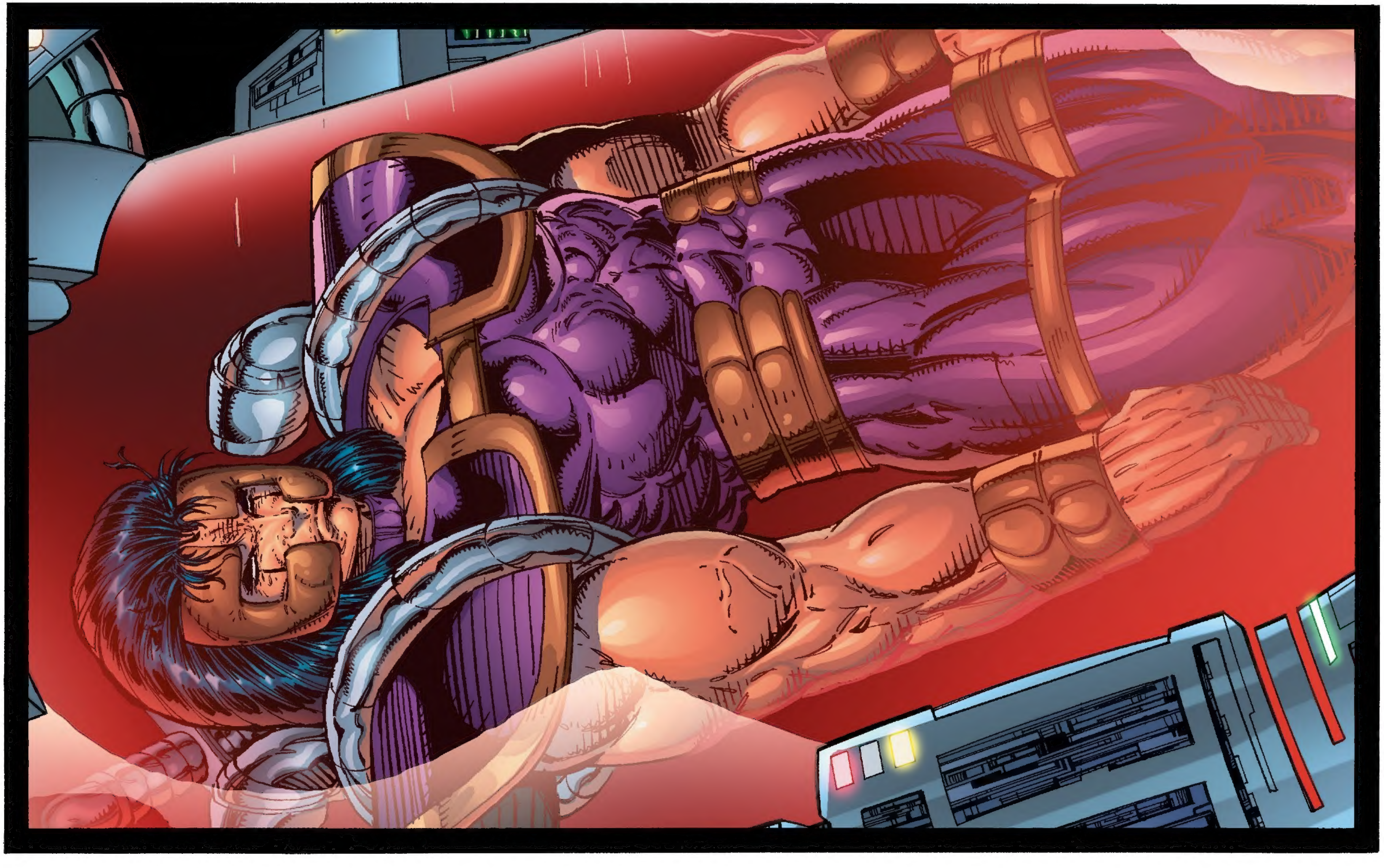
DUE RESPECT, DOCTOR... BUT ASIDE FROM HIS *HAIR COLOR,* THIS LOOKS LIKE THE ARYAN IDEAL TO ME...

GUY DOESN'T LOOK GERMAN TO *ME*...

* HYPOTHALAMIC LEVELS: STABLE --
* HEART FUNCTIONS: TWO BEATS PER MINUTE --
* BRAIN ACTIVITY: 12%... 11%... 13.5%...
* MOLECULAR DIAGNOSTICS: SCANNING...

HE HAS THE APPEARANCE OF A COILED SPRING. I RECOGNIZE A FELLOW WARRIOR... BUT DENIED GLORIOUS EXPRESSION...

SO HOW'D *THIS* CAT END UP BURIED IN KUSSEIN'S BASEMENT?!



"THEY SAID DR. WELLS WAS INSANE. PERSONALLY, I TENDED TO BELIEVE HE WAS A MAN SIMPLY OBSESSED WITH HUMAN GENETIC POTENTIAL. TO PUSH META-ABILITIES FAR BEYOND THAT WHICH ***NATURAL*** EVOLUTION HAS YET TO PRODUCE.

"CERTAINLY, IN HITLER'S GERMANY, THERE WAS NO SHORTAGE OF VOLUNTEERS, HOPING TO TRANSFORM THEMSELVES INTO THE ULTIMATE NAZI FIGHTING MACHINES.

"AS THE LEGENDS GO, BY THE LATE THIRTIES, WELLS HAD PROGRESSED IN HIS RESEARCH TO THE POINT WHERE HE COULD INVOLVE LIVING, ***HUMAN TEST SUBJECTS*** IN HIS EXPERIMENTS. OFFICIAL RECORD KEEPING WAS ESCHEWED AS WELLS SOUGHT THE DOWNTRODDEN AND SOCIALLY OPPRESSED TO TAKE PART IN THIS GROUND BREAKING RESEARCH.

"BUT WELLS WAS NO NAZI. HE WAS OBSESSED WITH A ***GREATER*** IDEAL, ONCE THAT REACHED FAR BEYOND POLITICS.

"IF THIS INDIVIDUAL IS INDEED A PRODUCT OF WELLS' BREAKTHROUGHS, THEN HE IS MOST ASSUREDLY ONE OF A KIND. THE LONE SURVIVOR OF A DOOMED EXPERIMENT."

"COILED SPRING" ISN'T FAR OFF. AS THE LEGEND GOES, DR. WELLS NEVER HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO PUT HIS PROJECT INTO PRACTICE...***WHATEVER*** THAT MIGHT BE.

HITLER'S SS WERE CLOSING IN. WE ***HAVE*** SEEN ***THEIR*** RECORDS... THEIR INSIDIOUS PLANS FOR THIS SOLDIER --

DAMN, MAN...THE WAR MIGHT'VE TURNED OUT A LOT ***DIFFERENT*** HUH...?

PERHAPS. AND IF I WERE YOU, I WOULD PROCEED WITH CAUTION.

THIS TECHNOLOGY IS MORE THAN HALF A CENTURY OLD.

THE LAST THING YOU WANT IS FOR THIS MAN TO AWAKEN. THE DAMAGE TO HIS ***MIND*** AFTER SO MANY DECADES OF CRYOGENIC SLEEP --

DULY NOTED, DOCTOR. OUR PARAMETERS ARE CRYSTAL CLEAR. RETRIEVAL AND TRANSPORT. THE UNITED STATES APPRECIATES YOUR ASSISTANCE IN THIS MATTER.

SURE WE DO. ANOTHER SUPER TROOPER KEPT OUT OF THE HANDS OF THE TERRORISTS. WE WIN AGAIN.

WHY DO I GET THE FEELING WE'LL KEEP THIS OFF THE NETWORK NEWSCASTS?

KATELLAN LAWS OF WAR DEMAND SCORING RESERVES OF POWER. THIS IS NO DIFFERENT THAN ANY OTHER WEAPON.

C'MON, COMBAT -- HOW THE HELL ARE WE GONNA' HANG ONTO OUR ***ENDORSEMENT DEALS*** IF WE KEEP TAKING THESE MISSIONS THAT INVOLVE A ***PRESS BLACKOUT?!*** I DUNNO, GUYS... THIS WHOLE THING DOESN'T ***FEEL*** RIGHT...!

A WARRIOR WITHOUT A WAR. I FIND MYSELF FEELING GREAT EMPATHY FOR THIS LOST SOUL. HE EXISTS BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH...

... NEVER EXPERIENCING THE RIGHTEOUS TASTE OF BATTLE ON HIS TONGUE.

BUT LET US NOT MOURN. PERHAPS OUR APPROPRIATION WILL PROVIDE HIM A ***NEW*** FUTURE.

OKAY, YOU'RE RIGHT. HOW 'BOUT WE LOOK ON THE BRIGHT SIDE... HE'LL MAKE A HELL OF AN ACTION FIGURE!

THAT'S NOT EXACTLY WHAT I WAS ***REFERRING*** TO, JACKEL --

THAT'S "COUGAR", PAL.

MY PERSONAL VIEW... THE DOCTOR IS CORRECT ABOUT USING EXTREME CAUTION. IF THIS TECH IS AT ALL ***UNSTABLE*** --

PARANOID MUCH? DON'T SWEAT IT.

LET'S JUST GET THIS THING LOADED BACK ONTO THE TRANSPORT SO WE CAN GET BACK TO --

-- THE MANNER IN WHICH HE *MOVES*... HE IS UNSTEADY... STILL GETTING HIS BEARINGS...

COUGAR! COMBAT! GET CLEAR--!

I... I DUNNO WHAT HAPPENED...

SOME SORT OF *RELEASE MECHANISM* --

YEAH, WELL... THE QUESTION IS: DOES HE SEE US AS *FRIENDS* OR *FOES*...?

WHOA. BIG MOTHER, ISN'T HE...?

SPRECHEN SIE ENGLISCH...?

DON'T GET TOO CLOSE. HE'S NOT --

WELCHES... JAHR IST ES...?

I...

... I AM...

SYSTEMIC LOCK: LANGUAGE TRANSLATOR ONLINE --

OKAY... YOU OBVIOUSLY DON'T KNOW YOUR ASS FROM YOUR ELBOW YET --

-- PERFECT OPPORTUNITY TO SEND YOU BACK TO SLUMBERLAND BEFORE YOU END UP HURTING YOURSELF!

NOTHING PERSONAL, BRO!

SELF-DEFENSIVE MEASURES: ENGAGE.

WHOOOAAA--!

ARE YOU... A WARRIOR OF D'KHAY?!

I AM ***KATELLAN*** BORN -- AND YOUR ACTIONS AGAINST ONE WHOM I BEGRUDGINGLY FIGHT ALONGSIDE HAS SEALED YOUR FATE!

YOU WILL SUBMIT TO OUR AUTHORITY!

HUHHNN-!

SO...

... DR. WELLS *WARNED* ME THAT THE FORCES OF DARKTHORNN WOULD POSSESS POWER THAT MIGHT RIVAL MY OWN.

BUT THIS IS WHY I WAS *CREATED* -- TO *DESTROY* THESE INVADERS AND PROTECT THE HUMAN RACE!

YOU'RE SPEAKING *GIBBERISH!* WE ARE *NOT* YOUR ENEMY--!

LIES!

THE SURVIVAL OF HUMANITY *DEPENDS* ON ME!

I HAVE BEEN ENGINEERED TO *KILL!* DR. WELLS HAS SACRIFICED *EVERYTHING* FOR MY EXISTENCE!

YOUR DR. WELLS IS LONG DEAD!

AND YOU WILL *NOT* PLACE YOUR HANDS ON ME!

NO!

THIS CANNOT BE--!

WE HAVE NO REASON TO LIE! YOU'VE BEEN ASLEEP FOR MORE THAN *SIXTY YEARS* --

-- AND YOU NEED TO *STAND DOWN,* SOLDIER!

WE CAN'T WASTE ANY MORE TIME SPARRING WITH THIS MAN.

RIPTIDE! WE NEED TO SUBDUE HIM WITHOUT KILLING HIM--!

STAND CLEAR, BOSS! NOW THAT WE'RE FINALLY OUT OF THAT IRAQI WASTELAND --

-- I CAN FEEL THE RUSH OF AN UNDERGROUND RIVER ABOUT A HALF-MILE DOWN! THAT'S ALL I NEED --

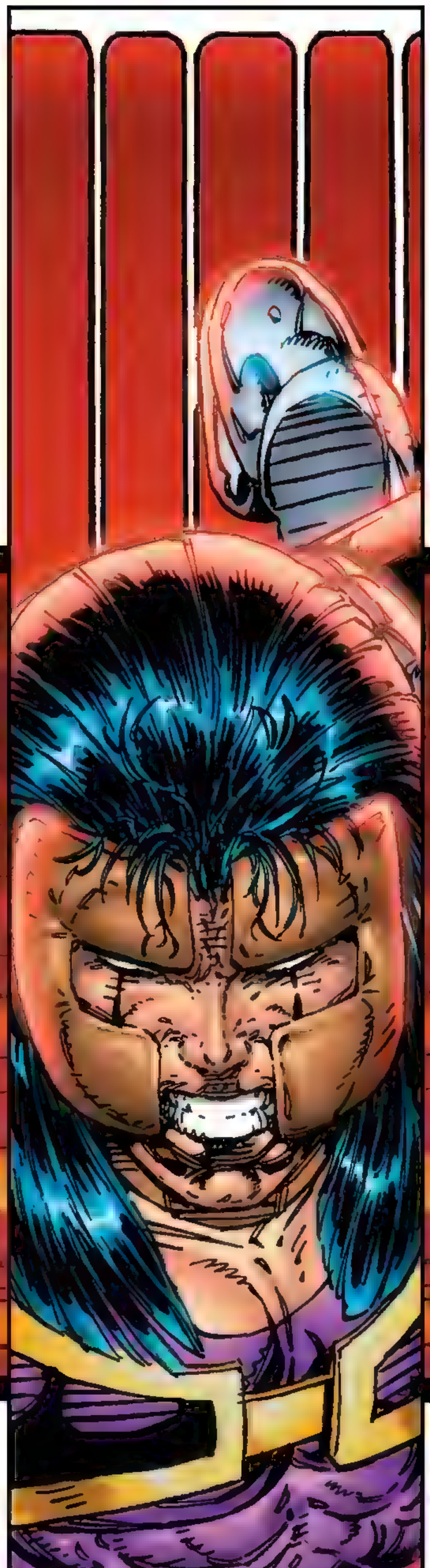
-- TO GIVE THIS GUY AN AQUA SLAM THAT'LL SET HIM UP PERFECTLY!

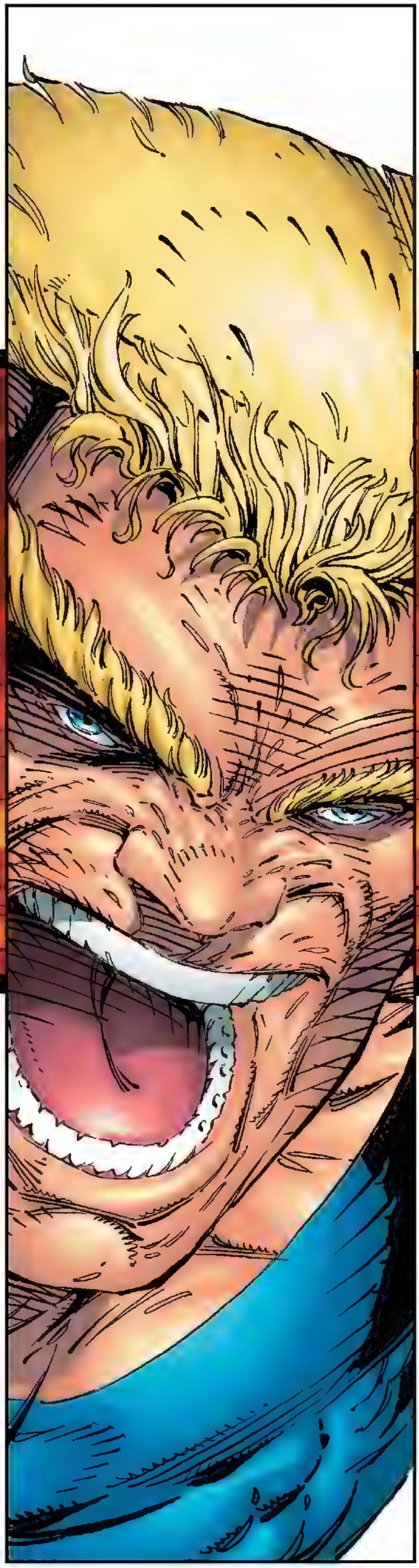
BRAHMA...

I GET IT, RIP!

I HATE TO ADMIT HOW MUCH I *GET OFF* ON THESE MEXICAN STANDOFFS --

-- BUT I WASN'T DRAFTED TO THE BIG GAME FOR MY *SUBTLETY*, WAS I?





CRACK!

KUUHNNN--!

SNAP!

HOLY--! HE'S STILL ON HIS FEET! AFTER GETTING POPPED LIKE THAT--!

WE'RE DEALING WITH *DIE HARD* LEVEL POWER HERE!

SONNUVA--! GIMME ANOTHER SHOT, COACH! I'LL *REALLY* LET LOOSE --

DAMAGE REPORT: COLLATING.

BODY BANK: INITIATE SELF-REPAIR MODE.

BACK OFF, BRAHMA! *I'M* GOING TO FINISH THIS ONCE AND FOR ALL! AND QUIT CALLING ME *COACH!*

DUNNTT--!

DEFENSIVE MEASURES: ENGAGED.

COUNTER-ATTACK: GO.

GET OFF--!

IF MY FATE IS TO DIE IN BATTLE DEFENDING THIS PLANET FROM YOUR AGGRESSIONS, THEN *SO BE IT!*

PAL... THE WAR'S *OVER!* OUR SIDE *WON!*

WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?! I WAS CREATED FOR THIS FUNCTION!

ALL THOSE WHO SERVE DARKTHORNN WILL FIND THEMSELVES AT MY --

PROXIMITY ALERT: DETECTING SPACIAL TRANSPORT SYSTEM ENGAGING --

ANALYSIS: "CRASH TUNNEL" TECHNOLOGY ACTIVE. IDENTIFY: ARMORED DISCIPLES OF D'KHAY.

BZZZT!

YEAARGG--!

KRAAKKOOOOOM!

BZZZT!

BZZZT!

ALL UNITS -- TARGET OPPOSITION! REPROGRAM FOR MULTI-LEVEL ASSAULT MANEUVER!

EXTINGUISH ALL LIFE!

LEAVE NOTHING STANDING!

ALL HAIL DARKTHORNN!

I'M ASSUMING THESE GUYS AREN'T WITH YOU...

WHAT THE HELL?! THE DOCTOR JUST *BOUGHT IT--!*

MY ONBOARD COMPUTER TELLS ME THEY ARE THE REPRESENTATIVES OF MY *TRUE ENEMY--!*

BODY BANK: REROUTE POWER --

-- ENERGIZING...

WILD GUESS HERE... THEY'RE NOT OF THIS EARTH, ARE THEY...?

JEEZUS--! THEY'RE MOVING IN *FAST,* TEAM! *WATCH IT--!*

THEY ARE NOT. THEY ARE WARRIORS FORGED WITHIN THE FIRES OF *D'KHAY--!*

DOESN'T SOUND LIKE AN IDYLLIC VACATION SPOT TO ME...!

NEXT ISSUE

YOUNGBLOOD DELUXE #3

YOUNGBLOOD '87

Back in 1987, I was fresh out of high school and eager to become a comic book creator. Like so many other beginning creators, I needed to assemble a series of pages that best represented my work. I was hoping to kill two birds with one stone and create sample pages that could be used to illustrate my storytelling skills for interested publishers as well as be used as potential pages in my own independent title. The independent comics market was budding at the time. With many new players in the field: Dark Horse, First Comics, Comico, Eclipse, and Megaton, to name just a few.

My sample pages featured a super-team concept I had been developing since high school, *Youngblood*. *Youngblood* was the result of all my favorite team books, with a smattering of *The Avengers* here, a dash of the *Legion of Super Heroes* there and a smidgen of *Teen Titans* for good measure. I started the sequence with a *Youngblood* audition sequence, much like those that I enjoyed in *Legion*. It provided an opportunity to showcase humor, action and some characterization. I headed out to the very first Wonder Con in Oakland, California with the *Youngblood '87* samples in tow and quickly circulated them among the many editors in attendance. To my dismay, every independent publisher turned me down. Dark Horse, Comico, First, Eclipse, all told me, "Thanks but no, thanks". I wasn't dejected yet, so I approached Dick Giordano, then the head honcho of DC, and he took a good look and told me that he would take a sample back with him to New York for consideration. Things were looking up! My friend Hank Kanalz urged me to wait in the portfolio review line at Marvel, but I thought I wasn't up to snuff. I hesitated before finally getting in the Marvel review line. It was a decision that effectively changed my life forever.

Mark Gruenwald, one of my favorite writers and editors at Marvel, took a quick look at my samples. He flipped back and forth through the Youngblood pages and then rose out of his chair to stand in front of me extending his hand. What did this all mean? I was seventeen years old and didn't quite know what to expect. Was I getting a blow off from Gruenwald? Hardly, turns out he was extending me the official Marvel handshake and told me I was hired and he'd like me to draw some stories for their solo *Avengers* title! Whoa! I was stunned, my dream had come true! I was going to draw comics for a living. I have never ever forgotten that day or that feeling. It was as special a moment as they come in life. And *Youngblood* had been the catalyst.

Shortly thereafter, I received word that Megaton comics, a great little comics company, was interested in publishing *Youngblood* as a series and we quickly brokered a deal to get the series going. I started drawing covers for the book and plotted out the series, but then my Marvel plots arrived and DC contacted me about a number of opportunities. I felt professionally obliged to pursue the work that Marvel and DC offered me. So I put *Youngblood* on the backburner, commited to one day launching it after my comics career had been firmly established. One of those covers I had drawn was inked by one of my all-time favorite artists, Jerry Ordway. I had the good fortune of striking up a friendship with Jerry through many convention appearances in my youth and Jerry was generous in his offer to ink my cover. It is my pleasure to finally give the cover its proper due by showcasing it here in this collection alongside the original sample pages featuring *Youngblood*. Hank Kanalz scripted the *Youngblood* pages and Diane Valentino lettered them up back in '87. In anticipation of this collection, I sent the pages to Matt Yackey who has colored more of my work than anyone in my career and asked him to "hook them up." He brought them to life with his vibrant colors and put the finishing touches on these pages that have meant so much to me throughout my career. Enjoy!

—**ROB LIEFELD**

YOUNGBLOOD
1987
LIEFELD
&
ORDWAY
&
YACKEY

LEFELD '97 . YACKEY

YOUTHQUAKE!

SENTINEL

SONIK

COUGAR

BRAHMA

RIPTIDE

PSI-FIRE

PHOTON

...AND NATURALLY, THESE ***SEEMINGLY*** INNOCENT PROTRUSIONS ACTUALLY EMIT A HIGHLY EFFECTIVE ANESTHETIC THAT WILL RENDER MY OPPONENT ***UTTERLY*** HELPLESS. I NEED ONLY PUSH THIS CONTROL AND A MICRO-THIN VISOR SLIDES ACROSS THE FRONT OF MY HELMET, PROTECTING ***ME***, OF COURSE, FROM THE EFFECTS OF THE ANESTHETIC. NOW, ***HERE*** WE HAVE MY COMPACT PROPULSION UNIT. AS SOON AS I FINISH EXPLAINING THE REST OF MY ***INGENIOUS*** ARMOR, WE CAN MOVE OUTSIDE FOR A FIRST HAND DEMONSTRATION!

RIPTIDE

SONIK

COUGAR

SENTINEL

NOW FOR THE EXCITING ***NEW*** FEATURES I'VE ADDED SINCE THE ***LAST*** TIME!

HANK KANALZ
WRITER

ROB LIEFELD
ARTIST

DIANE VALENTINO
LETTERER

ED DEGEORGE
EDITOR

THIS IS AN INFRA-RED NOCTURNAL ILLUMINATOR FOR OUR MORE COVERT MISSIONS!

AND THIS -- IS A VOICE MAGNIFIER. IT STRIKES THE FEAR OF TINKER IN THE HEARTS OF CRIM-INALS!

AND THIS SWITCH --

-SIGH- THERE'S MORE?

HOLD ON, TINK!

YOU'VE BEEN SHOWING THIS STUFF OF FOR ABOUT 45 MINUTES NOW. THINK YOU COULD ANSWER A COUPLE OF QUESTIONS FOR ME?

UH...SURE.

ARE THESE THE CENTRAL CONTROLS TO YOUR ARMOR?

YES! EVERYTH-

WHAT IF SOMEONE *DAMAGED* IT? LIKE--

-THIS!

I--I--UH--I--

SIZZLE

SIZZLE

UH--I--

YOU! DO YOU KNOW HOW MUCH THIS COST? HOW MUCH TIME?

THE CIRCUITRY ALONE TOOK ME OVER THREE HUNDRED HOURS TO PERFECT AND THE ENTIRE HYDRAULIC SKELETAL SYSTEM HAS BEEN SHOT AND MY ENERGIZED GRAPPLING HOOK WILL NEVER WORK PROPERLY NOW THAT--

YOU HAVEN'T HEARD THE LAST OF THIS! I'LL BE BACK!

AND THIS TIME YOU'LL REGRET IT, COUGAR!

HEY, COUG, DON'T YOU THINK THAT WAS A LITTLE TOO MUCH?

GIMME A BREAK! HE'LL COOL OFF IN A COUPLE OF DAYS.

HE ALWAYS DOES.

WELL, I KNOW AT LEAST TWO OF US NEEDA BREAK! EVERYBODY - LET'S TAKE FIFTEEN!

I DIDN'T THINK WE'D HAVE TO HOLD AUDITIONS AGAIN SO SOON. TINKER *TWICE* IN ONE YEAR IS TOO MUCH!

I KNOW BUT WE HAVE TO REPLACE LINK.

AT LEAST THERE ARE SOME HOPEFULS IN THE YOUTH BRIGADE! SEA-WOLF'S SHOW-ING SOM-

RIGHT.

AND THERE'S TINKER.

HEY, WITHOUT THESE GUYS, YOUR LIFE WOULD BE TOO SIMPLE.

DON'T REMIND ME.

WELL, LIKE IT OR NOT, LINK'S PLACE ON THE TEAM NEEDS TO BE FILLED. PARSONS WANTS TO KEEP THE PUBLIC FEELING SECURE.

BY ADDING SOME *ROOKIE* TO YOUNGBLOOD?

BY ADDING THE *BEST* WE CAN.

THEN I THINK THUMBELINA'S OUR BEST SHOT.

COME ON, *PSI-FIRE*, CHANGE THE TAPE! YOU'VE ALREADY PLAYED IT TWICE...

..AND I'M *TIRED* OF...

...HEARING PETER GABRIEL!

WELL, WHO WAS LISTENING TO BON JOVI ALL--

MAL! HAVE YOU PICKED THE FINAL CANDIDATES YET?

ANY LOOKERS?

END

WE'RE ABOUT TO START ON BRIGADE. AND WE'RE NOT LOOKING FOR BEAUTIES, DEREK.

SO WHY'S IT TAKING SO LONG?

TINK.

YOU MEAN THAT GOOBER SHOWED UP *AGAIN*? HOW MUCH CRAP DID HE ADD THIS TIME?

CUT IT OUT, DEREK.

WE'RE TALKING ABOUT *TINKER*, BRAHMA!

THE GUY MEANS WELL.

I KNOW. MAYBE IF WE PUT HIM IN THE BRIGADE--

HE'S GOING TO HAVE TO IMPRESS US A LOT MORE THAN HE HAS.

I SHOULD *HOPE* SO.

AFTER WHAT HAPPENED WITH *COPYCAT*, I'M SURPRISED SO MANY PEOPLE HAVE MADE IT TO THE YOUTH BRIGADE!

COPYCAT WAS A MISTAKE WE *ALL* REGRET.

AND THAT'S WHY THEY'RE UNDER CONSTANT SUPER-VISION.

SO WHERE'D YOU STASH THEM ALL FOR THE DAY?

"THEY'RE ALL WAITING IN THE C ROOM."

--WAITING IS *POINTLESS! WE* SHOULD BE THE FIRST TO TRY OUT FOR THE NEW POSITION...

...NOT SOM-

SEA-WOLF! SHOW SOME PATIENCE. IT'S A VIRTUE. AND SOMETHING I LOOK FOR.

WE KNOW YOU'VE BEEN WAITING, BUT IF *THIS* GIVES YOU A PROBLEM --

OH NO, MRS. FEARLESS LEADER! WE'VE JUST BEEN COOLING OUR HEELS HERE FOR OVER TWO HOURS!

SORRY, BUT TO KEEP THINGS FAIR, WE HAD TO SEPERATE YOU FROM THE NEW RECRUITS!

HEY, YOU GUYS ARE STILL ON THE TOP OF OUR LIST.

THAT'S RIGHT, BUT ONLY *ONE* OF YOU WILL QUALIFY FOR THE TEAM.

WELL, THAT SHOULDN'T BE A PROBLEM FOR ME!

THAT SHOULDN'T BE A PROBLEM FOR *ANY* OF US, WOLF. WHEN DO WE GET TO PROVE OURSELVES?

THE NEXT WRITTEN EXAM WILL BE IN TEN MINUTES. AFTER THAT, THE FINAL CUT WILL BE MADE.

IN THE FINAL TEST, YOU'RE UP AGAINST *US!*

SO, WE'LL KNOW IF WE STAND A CHANCE BY TOMORROW?

WHAT HAPPENS TO THOSE OF US WHO DON'T MAKE IT?

ENNG..ENNG..ENNG..ENNG..ENNG..EN

ANOTHER DRILL?

NOT BY THE LOOK ON RIPTIDE'S FACE.

DON'T WE EVER GET A BREAK?

IT'S WHY WE GET PAID, COUG.

MAKE TRACKS, GUYS! LOOK ALIVE!

TOOK YOU LONG ENOUGH.

WHAT'S THE SITUATION? WHY THE PRIORITY ALARM?

SPEED. THREE MINUTES, TSK.

FOLLOW ME. WE'RE DEBRIEFING.

AVAILABLE NOW

RATED **T+** (TEEN PLUS)

ZONE